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TOP SECRET

Meeting of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs with Ambassador Lewis at the Prime Minister's Residence, Jerusalem, November 23, 1977, at 6 p.m.

Present: William Brubeck and Yehuda Avner

P.M.: I promised the President in my telephone conversation with him on November 21 that I would write (the P.M. handed the Ambassador his letter to the President which is cabled separately.) I promised I would send a copy to Simcha. Its contents must remain between ourselves. I am informing Simcha that the letter is for his eyes only and he must not show it to anybody.

The meetings referred to in the second passage of the letter may take place soon. We are waiting to hear from Sadat about the setting up of the two meetings. I wish now to add a few remarks about the Sadat visit.

Sadat, in a private talk, brought up the question of my visiting Cairo. In the interview with Barbara Walters he had said, in a reply to a question, "I will invite Mr. Begin to Sinai." In response, I said to him, "I will invite you." All this was said in good humour. Later on, in a private talk, Sadat said to me: "You thought I was joking. I wasn't. I could, for instance, bring all my Parliament to Ismailia for you, whenever you want to come." He went on to tell me that he could not invite me to Cairo for certain reasons. He didn't tell me the reasons but I could divine them. I should imagine, among other things, that in Cairo there are uncontrollable security problems. I told him I would wait and that I don't want to make now an interim visit to Ismailia.

Marvin Kalb, according to a radio report, heard here, came out with the story that we had agreed between us that an American Palestinian professor could participate in Geneva. I want you to know,

Mr. Ambassador, that the subject did not come up at all.

Lewis: Did you talk at all about the problem of representation?

P.M.: The subject did not come up at all.

FM: Sadat wasn't interested in procedure; only in substance - with a working paper or without a working paper.

P.M.: The FM had jokingly remarked that you are not interested in paper but only in working.

FM: About an invitation tothe P.M. to Egypt, Sadat said to me, "so long as you keep our territory it is very difficult for me to have Israelis coming to Egypt." He did not refer specifically to the P.M., but spoke in general terms. I am saying this because of the general attitude in this country about "normalizations". I note that Meshel is already inviting Egyptian trade unionists to Israel.

P.M.: It is important for President Carter to know that Sadat did not raise at all the question of representation.

Lewis: I want to understand more about the procedural matter in light of your talks. As I understand it there will be meetings within few weeks with Dayan and their man. Do you think one of the subjects raised will be when Geneva will be convened and on what terms - or will it deal with issues like territory, the Palestinian matter, etc.?

FM: I can tell you that Sadat said that he was not interested in procedure and that he did not want to go to Geneva without proper preparation. He said that in Geneva we face the problem of publicity, of TV and radio and you cannot negotiate intelligently. Therefore, he said we have to discuss everything beforehand. At the same time, he said that we cannot make a separate peace.

P.M.: We did not suggest it.

FM: From his point of view, had he wanted to negotiate a separate agreement with Israel, we could sit down with Egypt and negotiate and sign. At the same time, he doesn't want to do this separately and in Geneva we have the Syrians who would create a problem. Therefore, I don't know exactly what the actual intention is. Their Foreign Minister told me - and I am sure this was after he spoke to his President - that for Sadat the Palestinian question comes first. He said he thinks his first subject should be the discussion of the Palestinian Arab problem. This, he said, should be discussed with us in principle, and then they can tackle the Egyptian-Israel problem. However, I don't know whether their FM is the one Sadat has in mind for negotiation with us. I have the feeling it won't be him. So, the whole thing is not yet clarified. Sadat's attitude is a very general one. It is clear however that he wants to ta substance not procedure.

P.M.: I would like to say for the ear ofthe President - the letter is only for his eyes - that we must be very careful about leaks. We shall warn Simcha about the letter. He must be the only man who sees it.

Lewis: I assure you there will be security restriction. What exactly will the Gamassi-Weizman meetings deal with?

P.M.: Mainly arrangements on the ground - false alarms, etc. They will arrange further meetings whenever necessary. It is a very serious and positive development. Also, I wish to emphasize, that we agreed that there is nothing not negotiable on his side. Despite what he said in the Knesset, he told me privately that we shall talk on all issues.

Lewis: You are convinced that territory is not excluded from negotiation?

P.M.: Yes - anything is negotiable. May I say again that the atmosphere of the talks was friendly and frank. The Egyptian delegation - and I believe Sadat himself - was impressed and even taken by surprise by the warmth of the reception not only of our people but also of our delegation. There was, therefore, an atmosphere of confidence. We talked to each other. We have differences of opinion, but we shall talk about them. Sadat spoke through our Knesset to all our citizens. I think we proved to him what parliamentary democracy is. The Egyptians left with good feeling. You could see in the letter from Sadat to our President.

Lewis: I agree. Did you speak about what to do about Syria?

P.M.: We did not. He said to me all the time that he is neither impressed by, nor worried about his critics. He cited the uproar against him after the disengagement and interim agreements. He said that matters will calm down. The Syrian speech yesterday in the U.N. was horrible.

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Lewis: It was. Ambassador Young reported that many Third World countries were critical of the speech. Young even said that the effect of the speech may be helpful to Israel and Egypt.

FM: You, Mr. Ambassador, are a new-comer to the Middle East and I sometimes say that in America you do not always understand the Arabs. Egypt can do without the other Arab countries both in war and in leadership. None of the Arab countries can do without Egypt. If Egypt turns to the African countries like Morocco, Tunis and Sudan, they too can do without the other Arab countries. Syria and Jordan cannot do without Egypt. The question for Sadat is whether his people and the armed forces will support him. We have the information that Gamassi's public statement of support does indeed reflect the army's support. Another point is the criticism from Europe and may be in certain circles in the U.S. that we did not make Sadat a tangible gesture. I wish to explain that had we offered for example, some territorial concession, it would have made his position much more difficult. He came intending to show that he was not trying to get something for Egypt. We could not offer him anything for Syria and he wasn't authorised to accept anything for the Palestinians. About his meeting Palestinian notables, he did not make a point of it. He said to the Prime Minister, if you want me to meet them I will; if not, not. He did not want to get invloved as the spokesman of the Palestinians. Had we offered him the whole of Sinai he would have said, please don't do it. I did not come for Egypt, but for the whole of the Arab people.

Lewis: I agree. Certainly, we have not made any criticism of that kind. Anything you would have given or hinted at just for Egypt, would have been bad for Sadat.

FM: We have received the letter from President Carter in which he said in connection with the Sadat visit, why can't we, while Sadat was here, have an agreement to a Geneva plenary session, or that Syria be a part of the West Bank working group. Sadat indicated that in all these matters he was not interested. He did not want to discuss them. If the President or Brzezinski thought that Sadat would want to go into such issues, they were wrong.

Lewis: What should we do, if anything, in the next weeks and months about Geneva?

P.M.: I am sure that after our talks with Sadat, the next stage is a meeting between Dayan and his Egyptian counterpart. Until then, no initiative should be taken. After all, Sadat was here.

Lewis: Therefore, your feeling is we should sit tight for now?

P.M.: I think so. If, as a result of our talks, we prevent another war from breaking out, this is the first stage that makes peace negotiations possible and then if we talk directly, this is the second stage for peace. Therefore, you should wait till Dayan has his talks and until Ezer and Gamassi will meet together.

I spoke to Sadat about the possibility of establishing a direct line of communication, but he did not answer.

Lewis: We are always at your disposal.

P.M.: We shall use your good offices.

I suppose this is the proper summing up: We must wait till we hear where and when Dayan will meet Sadat's man of confidence.

FM: One must give thought as to the motivation of Sadat and his people for pushing for peace and for taking such a step. The issue is not the giving back of Sharm el-Sheikh. Sharm is all desert and it won't change the economy of Egypt. Their real target is to improve the economy of the country. In this connection, much depends on America. I would suggest that you make a study in what way to help Egypt economically if there is a peace agreement. If they know that such help is conditional on peace, you will help Sadat very much personally vis-a-vis his own people. I heard from some of Sadat's entourage that there are still ruins from the war of attrition. They do not have the money to repair.

P.M.: Sadat described to me the economic problem. He used the word "horrible" . He said the problem was horrible and he complained about the military expenditure.

Lewis: What about Jordan?

P.M.: We may have a contact with Jordan. I will take it up with you when the time comes. We may take some initiative about a meeting.

Lewis: About Syria, despite their language at the U.N., they have rather carefully said that the peace process isn't off. In other words, they have not attacked Geneva. This is significant. Assad hasn't burned all his bridges.

FM: You probably noted that Sadat is upset that you brought in the Russians.

Lewis: Did he talk to you about that?

P.M.: Yes. He wasn't happy with the U.S.-USSR communique.

FM: When he spoke publicly about Geneva he remarked that Egypt has a strained relationship with Russia and yet Russia is co-chairman at Geneva. He, therefore, said he wanted to work out matters of substance before Geneva.

P.M.: Remember the Russians joined Syria and the PLO in condemning the visit.

Lewis: (in a jocular tone) We have to think of this in historical terms. Perhaps because of the joint communique we helped bring Sadat to Jerusalem.

P.M.: Let us learn a lesson from this. You remember when we consulted privately about Sadat's coming. All that I said I would do, I did.

Lewis: You did.

P.M.: Therefore, let us consult. Had you but consulted with us in advance on the joint communique, it would have been better for everybody.

Lewis: We Americans are slow learners. But we have learned. We won't do it again. We shall consult.

P.M.: Please, no more fait accomplies. I believe that Sadat during his visit here began to better understand the issue of security. From Monday morning onward he spoke over and over again about understanding our sensitivity to security.

About his forthcoming address to his Parliament on ~~Saturday~~ Saturday, ~~Wednesday,~~ I know he can be very harsh. I am ready for it. (PM leaving to phone President Katzir in Mexico City concerning Sadat's letter of thanks to him)

FM: There was an hypothesis before Sadat came that he was actually coming to expose and unveil the real nature of Israel, that we did not want peace, etc. I think that this theory, too, has been proved false.

I told the Likud faction last night that I had asked Sadat before the speeches - what do you want us to say publicly so as to help the success of your speeches. He said, just tell me what you are prepared to do and not prepared to do. He said just be honest and sincere . Also, when I drove with the Egyptian Foreign Minister from Lod to Jerusalem, I asked him whether Sadat would speak publicly about the PLO. I suggested to him that the President should not mention the PLO for if he did, we would have to react and the whole thing would infect the atmosphere. If the President were to demand of us to accept the PLO, it would hardly be a message of peace as far as we are concerned. In the end, Sadat did not mention the PLO. Their Foreign Minister subsequently told me that he had transmitted my message to the President. I was, of course, very happy that he did not mention the PLO, although I am not certain that it was because of my discussion.

Lewis: I, too, was happy. I will tell you something in the greatest confidence. I have good reason to believe that in a semi-final draft of his Knesset speech there was a large section on the PLO. Therefore, your message may have had an effect.

There is now an enormous wave of expectation in the world, except in Cairo and in Jerusalem. I am therefore a little worried about nothing overt happening for some weeks and the resulted feeling that Geneva will be drifting away.

FM: About Geneva, I am not sure that Sadat is in a hurry. I had the impression in my talk with their FM in the car back to Lod that t hey want prior intensive negotiations. He remarked to me that whether the visit here wil prove a failure or not, will depend on what happens next. He felt that there should be ongoing negotiations. For him, the momentum does not lead directly to Geneva. I feel that Sadat is less anxious to go to Geneva with Syria, the Russians and the PLO. He is obviously very hurt by their attitude. He cannot ignore it; they call for his blood.

Lewis: If Geneva does not take place for a while and if Sadat cannot sign a separate agreement with you, how does he think the Palestinian question and that of Jordan be managed?

FM: He gives a high priority to the Palestinian question in principle. He does not want to sign anything. His attitude is, let us agree in principle how it will go. I think he believes he can bring Jordan in eventually. I do not agree with the P.M. about bringing in Jordan now. If we invite Hussein now he will not come.

(P.M. returns after phoning President Katzir)

P.M.: Our President is elated by his reception in Mexico. He will publish Sadat's letter in a few hours in Mexico City. Sadat likes our President very much. He appreciated his sientific knowledge. Sadat is intelligent but he has no background of study.

Lewis: I read in our newspapers that an estimated 30 million people in the U.S. viewed the Knesset speeches.

P.M.: The reception arrangements we prepared for Sadat were almost perfect except for the simultaneous translations of the speeches in the Knesset. May be, the translators were nervous and excited.

Lewis: When are you leaving for Britain?

P.M.: On December 2. I will be away exactly a week, including Geneva. I would like to see your Ambassador in London if I may.

Lewis: Certainly, it would be a good idea. His name is Brewster. I will cable him. I am going on leave to Sharm el-Sheikh for Thanksgiving. Every time I go there I realise more and more how important Sharm is for you.

(The meeting ended at 19.30)